A PRACTICAL CONSUMER GUIDE

How to Research a Dietary Supplement Before Buying

A clear, repeatable method for reading labels, calculating the real supply, comparing costs, checking claims, and preparing better questions before purchase.

READ	CALCULATE	COMPARE
The complete label	Supply and cost	Claims and policies

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Educational use only. This guide does not diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any condition and is not a substitute for advice from a qualified healthcare professional.

Start With the Decision, Not the Bottle

Supplement research is easier when you separate measurable product information from advertising. The front of a bottle is designed to attract attention. The complete label, purchasing terms, and independent sources provide the details needed for a careful comparison.

This guide does not tell you which supplement to take. Instead, it offers a worksheet-style method for collecting facts and identifying questions that may require professional advice.

The five-part method

1	**Purpose**	Define the specific reason you are researching the product.
2	**Label**	Record serving size, servings, ingredients, and amounts.
3	**Practicality**	Calculate supply, daily routine, and cost per serving.
4	**Transparency**	Examine claims, company details, testing, and policies.
5	**Suitability**	Consider medicines, conditions, allergies, and professional input.

A longer ingredient list is not automatically better. Clear quantities and a formula that matches a defined purpose are more useful comparison points than ingredient count alone.

1. Define the Purpose

Before comparing products, write down the exact question you are trying to answer.

- What specific wellness or nutrition goal am I exploring?
- Have I considered food, sleep, exercise, or other relevant habits?
- Am I trying to replace a prescribed medicine? If so, stop and speak with the prescriber.
- Do I have a condition, allergy, upcoming procedure, or other factor that changes the risk?

2. Read the complete label

The FDA explains that a Supplement Facts label generally identifies the serving size, servings per container, dietary ingredients, and the amount of each ingredient per serving. Other ingredients, such as fillers, binders, capsule materials, or flavorings, may appear separately.

Record these details

Label field	What to record	Why it matters
Serving size	Capsules, tablets, scoops, gummies, or volume	The ingredient amounts usually apply to one serving, not necessarily one unit.
Servings per container	The stated number of servings	This helps estimate how long the package should last.
Active ingredients	Exact ingredient names and forms	Different chemical or botanical forms may not be directly comparable.
Amount per serving	Quantity and unit for every disclosed ingredient	A list without quantities is difficult to evaluate.
Other ingredients	Fillers, flavors, colors, capsule materials, allergens	These may matter for allergies or dietary preferences.

3. Calculate the Real Supply and Cost

A package count is not the same as a serving count. A bottle with 60 capsules lasts 30 days when the suggested serving is two capsules per day.

Three useful calculations

Question	Formula	Example
How many days?	Total units / units used each day	60 capsules / 2 daily = 30 days
Cost per serving?	Total price / servings per container	$29.99 / 30 = about $1.00
Estimated monthly cost?	Cost per serving x daily servings x 30	$1.00 x 1 x 30 = $30

Include the complete purchase cost

- Shipping and handling
- Taxes, when applicable
- Minimum multi-bottle orders
- Subscription or automatic-renewal terms
- Return-shipping costs and refund deadlines

Comparison tip: compare like with like. Use the same unit, serving basis, time period, and complete delivered cost for every product.

4. Separate Claims From Evidence

Words such as natural, advanced, premium, and revolutionary are marketing descriptions. They do not establish that a product is effective, safe, or suitable for every person.

Pause when you see

- Guaranteed or immediate results
- Promises to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent a disease
- Major changes without any other action
- One formula promoted for many unrelated outcomes
- Urgency designed to prevent careful comparison

FDA distinguishes several categories of label claims. Some structure/function claims describe support for a normal body function, but these claims do not mean FDA approved the product or verified that it works for a particular person.

Check company transparency

Look for	Useful questions
Responsible company	Is the manufacturer, packer, or distributor identified with contact information?
Complete formula	Are quantities disclosed, or are ingredients grouped inside a proprietary blend?
Testing information	Does the company explain what was tested, by whom, and whether documentation is available?
Warnings	Are allergens, age limits, pregnancy warnings, or medicine cautions stated clearly?
Purchasing policies	Are shipping, subscriptions, cancellations, returns, and refunds understandable before payment?

5. Consider Personal Suitability

A product that appears suitable on paper may still be inappropriate for an individual. NIH notes that supplements can have strong effects, interact with medicines, and create problems around surgery. High doses and overlapping products can also increase risk.

Speak with a qualified healthcare professional before use if you

- Take prescription or over-the-counter medicine
- Have an existing health condition
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Are preparing for surgery or another procedure
- Plan to combine several supplements
- Are considering a product for a child

Create one complete list

Write down every medicine and supplement you use, including the product name, ingredient amounts, dose, and frequency. Bring the list to a doctor, pharmacist, registered dietitian, or other qualified professional. This makes overlapping ingredients and possible interactions easier to spot.

> **Do not stop or replace a prescribed medicine because of information in a supplement advertisement, review, or general guide. Discuss changes with the prescribing professional.**

What a quality seal can and cannot tell you

Independent quality testing may provide information about manufacturing, label accuracy, or contaminants. NIH cautions that a quality seal does not guarantee that a supplement is safe or effective for you. Treat it as one piece of evidence, not a complete decision.

Product Comparison Worksheet

Use one column for each product. Write N/A when information is not available.

Comparison point	Product A	Product B	Product C
Product name	_____	_____	_____
Purpose being considered	_____	_____	_____
Serving size	_____	_____	_____
Servings per container	_____	_____	_____
Daily units required	_____	_____	_____
Active ingredients and amounts	_____	_____	_____
Other ingredients or allergens	_____	_____	_____
Estimated days supplied	_____	_____	_____
Delivered price	_____	_____	_____
Cost per serving	_____	_____	_____
Subscription or renewal?	_____	_____	_____
Return deadline and conditions	_____	_____	_____
Company and contact information	_____	_____	_____
Warnings or interaction questions	_____	_____	_____

Final Pre-Purchase Checklist

[ ] I identified the specific reason I am considering the product.

[ ] I read the complete Supplement Facts panel and other ingredients.

[ ] I recorded the amount of every disclosed active ingredient.

[ ] I calculated how long one container should last.

[ ] I compared the complete delivered cost and cost per serving.

[ ] I reviewed claims without treating marketing language as proof.

[ ] I checked company information, warnings, testing details, and policies.

[ ] I considered overlapping ingredients, medicines, conditions, and procedures.

[ ] I know which questions require advice from a qualified professional.

Guide source and publisher

This original guide was prepared by Find Supplement Review. Visit https://findsupplementreview.com/ for supplement reviews, ingredient insights, product comparisons, and practical buying guides.

Authoritative references

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- U.S. Food and Drug Administration - Questions and Answers on Dietary Supplements

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration - Label Claims for Food and Dietary Supplements

- NIH Office of Dietary Supplements - Dietary Supplements: What You Need to Know

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